

Message Text

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TAGS: SPOP, CS
SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S ROLE IN DEALING WITH PRESSING GLOBAL PROBLEMS --
POPULATION GROWTH AND ADEQUATE FOOD PRODUCTION

REF: A. STATE 107370, B. SAN JOSE 1779,

1. SUMMARY. THE SUBJECT CONTINUING DIALOGUE WITH HOST COUNTRY LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN A LONG-STANDING ONE IN COSTA RICA, A COUNTRY WHOSE RHETORIC HAS BEEN MATCHED BY SUBSTANTIALLY GOOD PERFORMANCE ON POPULATION/FOOD PROBLEMS. WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT ACCOMPANIED BY MORE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION, COSTA RICA HAS BEEN ABLE TO REDUCE ITS DEMOGRAPHIC GROWTH RATE FOR 3.9 PERCENT IN G OYP TO 2.2 PERCENT CURRENTLY. THE VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS IN 1976 APPROACHED 70 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S TOTAL, WHILE AGRICULTURAL ITEMS REPRESENTED ONLY 7 PERCENT OF TOTAL IMPORTS. SINCE 1965, COSTA RICA'S AGRICULTURAL GROWTH REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN THE HIGHEST IN THE HEMISPHERE. FAVORABLE TO THESE DEVELOPMENTS ARE, WE ARE CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO CONTINUE ENGAGING TOP LEADERSHIP IN DISCUSSIONS ON THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE POPULATION/FOOD PROBLEM. I AND MY SENIOR STAFF ANTICIPATED THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S ASSUMPTION OF POWER JUST A MATTER OF DAYS AGO BY CONDUCTING A LONG AND SPIRITED DISCUSSION OF THIS AND OTHER ISSUES

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WITH PRESIDENT CARAZO, HIS VICE PRESIDENT AND OTHER SENIOR GOCR OFFICIALS IN LATE APRIL BEFORE THEY TOOK OFFICE. THE DIALOGUE IS CONTINUING. IT COULD BE FURTHERED GREATLY BY MORE FORTHCOMING RESPONSES TO COSTA RICA'S ASPIRATIONS IN REGARD TO FOOD EFFORTS TO THE US AND EXPANDED ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN KEY AREAS, IN RECOGNITION OF COSTA RICA'S POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT RECORD.

2. HAVING SPENT MORE THAN 20 OF THE LAST 24 YEARS PHYSICALLY PRESENT IN LATIN AMERICA IN AID OF HOST COUNTRY AND UNIVERSITY ACTIVITIES OF A DEVELOPMENT NATURE, THE GEHER FOUR AT WASHINGTON END ON THE SAME SUBJECT MATTER, MY ONLY TROUBLE IS LEARNING WHEN TO SHUT UP ABOUT POPULATION, FOOD AND OTHER CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES. THE RECORD SHOWS THAT MY IMMEDIATE PREDECESSORS, AMBASSADORS VAKY AND TODMAN, WERE MOST EFFECTIVE IN KEEPING THE DIALOGUE GOING IN COSTA RICA ON THESE TOPICS. MY IMMEDIATE ASSOCIATES, MOST OF WHOM HAVE HAD PRIOR VALUABLE EXPERIENCE IN ASSISTANCE AREAS, LIKEWISE HAVE SHOWN NO RELUCTANCE TO ENGAGE TOP GOCR OFFICIALS ON THESE TOPICS. WE ARE CONTINUING TO DO SO, AND GREATLY WELCOME THE ENDORSEMENT TO THESE EFFORTS PROVIDED IN REFTEL (A).

3. COSTA RICA STILL HAS MUCH TO DO TO ACHIEVE ITS ANNOUNCED AND WIDELY ACCEPTED GOALS IN THIS REGARD, BUT ITS SUSTAINED PERFORMANCE IN PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT WITH GREATER EQUITY IS A CREDITABLE ONE. ACHIEVEMENT OF GNP PER CAPITA WELL ABOVE THAT OF HER CENTRAL AMERICAN NEIGHBORS ONLY HINTS AT THE RELATIVELY HIGHER DEGREE OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING ACCOMPLISHED BY THIS SMALL NATION. THE DROP IN ANNUAL DEMOGRAPHIC GROWTH FROM 3.9 PERCENT AS RECENTLY

AS 1960 TO JUST 2.4 PERCENT TODAY (WORLD-WIDE AVERAGE FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES) IS STILL TOO HIGH TO PERMIT EVEN BETTER EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. NEVERTHELESS, THE DROP IN BIRTHS FROM 48 PER 1,000 IN 1960 TO 29 PER 1,000 CURRENTLY PROBABLY IS OWED AS MUCH TO EDUCATIONAL, URBAN AND EMPLOYMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MENT FACTORS AS TO AVAILABILITY OF FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES. WHATEVER THE EXPERTS CONCLUDE, FURTHER PROGRESS ON ALL COUNTS WILL BE NEEDED IF A MORE APPROPRIATE POPULATION GROWTH IS TO BE ACHIEVED. WE WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK TO INFLUENCE THINKING AND ACTIONS BY THE NEW GOCR TO THIS END. THE PROSPECTS OF COSTA RICA'S POPULATION AT CURRENT RATES DOUBLING IN 30 YEARS IS NOT A HAPPY ONE. HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSIONS SUCH AS THAT OF APRIL 19, REPORTED IN PARA 14, REF B, ON THE POPULATION THEME WILL BE CONTINUED, AS WILL EFFORTS IN CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR, UN AND OTHERS, RECOGNIZING THAT ALL GOCR OFFICIALS ARE NOT AS FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO CONTINUING POPULATION EFFORTS AS THE NEW PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT APPEAR TO BE.

4. ONLY LIMITED COMFORT IS TAKEN FROM THE FACT THAT COSTA RICA'S AGRICULTURAL GROWTH SINCE 1965 REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN THE HIGHEST IN THE HEMISPHERE. THE "PROBLEM" EXPORT COMMODITIES (COFFEE, BANANAS, BEEF AND SUGAR) HAVE ACCOUNTED FOR MOST OF THIS GROWTH, THOUGH IN RECENT YEARS FOOD GRAIN PRODUCTION ALSO HAS EXPANDED AND DIVERSIFICATION OF BOTH DOMESTIC AND EXPORT PRODUCTS GENERALLY HAS INCREASED.

PRODUCTION OF FOOD STAPLE, SUCH AS RICE AND BEANS ARE NOW SUFFICIENT

TO MEET DOMESTIC DEMAND, A WIDE VARIETY OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES ARE GROWN, AN EXPANDING DAIRY INDUSTRY EXISTS, AND COSASTAL OIL PALM PLANTATIONS SUPPLY MOST OF THE COUNTRY'S EDIBLE OIL NEEDS.

5. AGRICULTURAL ITEMS NOW ACCOUNT FOR ALMOST 70 PERCENT OF THE EXPORT TOTAL, VERSUS A LOW 7 PERCENT OF TOTAL IMPORTS DEVOTED TO ANIMALS, FOOD AND FEED, CLOSE TO HALF OF THAT REPRESENTED BY GRAINS. THIS ACHIEVEMENT CAN BE ENHANCED BY GREATER COSTA RICAN ACCESS TO US MARKETS, PARTICULARLY FOR ITS LEAN BEEF, IF THE USG CAN DEVISE AN ACCEPTABLE WAY TO PLACATE PRODUCERS IN MORE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND OUR OWN. THE OBJECT OF THE SUBJECT DIALOGUE OBVIOUSLY IS NOT INSURE THAT WE IN THE US WILL BE SUFFICIENTLY FED, BUT IT IS EQUALLY CLEAR THAT THE WORLD FOOD SUPPLIES ARE LARGELY FUNGIBLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND THAT ANY REASONABLE STIMULUS TO COSTAL WAN#PRODUCTION OF NEEDED PROTEIN REBOUNDS TO THE WORLD'S TOTAL BENEFIT.

6. RECENT AID LOANS IN SUPPORT OF STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURAL COM-MODITY SYSTEMS AND IN NUTRITION, PLUS PEACE CORPS PRESENCE IN THE SAME AREAS, BUTTRESS OUR EXHORTATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, COSTA RICA REITERATES IN INCREASINGLY STRIDENT TONES ITS CONCERN THAT STEADY PROGRESS IN DEVELOPMENT IS A CATCH 22 SITUATION AS REGARDS BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL LENDERS. UNBURDENED BY MILITARY EXPEND-ITURES, IT HAS MOVED INCOME UP IN REAL TERMS, ONLY TO FIND ITSELF PRICED OUT, IN EFFECT, AND MOST PREMATURELY, COSTA RICAN OFFICIALS ARGUE, FROM THE VOLUME AND TERMS OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IT SEEKS. SEE PARAS 9 THROUGH 12 OF REFTEL B IN THIS REGARD, IN WHICH PRESI-DENT CARAZO STATES THAT TO TERMINATE AID -- READ THIS TO MEAN SUFFICIENT AID ON REASONABLY SOFT TERMS -- TO SO-CALLED MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES LIKE COSTA RICA IS TANTAMOUNT TO "CUTTING OFF THE ENGINES OF AN AIRPLANE JUST AFTER TAKE-OFF".

7. OUR DIALOGUE WOULD BE ENHANCED BY SUFFICIENT WASHINGTON ATTENTION TO THIS CONCERN AND TRADE PC BLDQS#OF COUNTRIES SERIOUSLY DEVOTED TO MEETING THEIR OWN AND SHARING IN THE SOLUTION OF THE WORLD'S DIFFI-CULTIES IN AREAS SO CRITICAL AS THAT OF POPULATION/FOOD. WEISSMAN

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